

The State Museum of the History of St.Petersburg
Rumiantsev Palace

'BORDERS' PROJECT BY Varvara Shavrova

17 May-12 June 2007

2007 is the Year of China in Russia. Exhibition project of a Russian-born artist Varvara Shavrova is a large scale total installation that includes drawings, photography and video dedicated to the problem of connections and inter relationships between two ancient cultures, two cardinaly opposite viewpoints, symbolized by the two largest nations in the world: Russia and China.

Varvara Shavrova was born in Moscow in 1968, studied at the Moscow Polygraphic Institute (1989). From 1989 lives and works in London. Shavrova lectured in a number of London art colleges and universities. In 2005 Shavrova moved to China, where she now lives and works.

Shavrova's exhibitions include many group exhibitions in London, Dublin, Glasgow, Birmingham. From 1996 more than 20 solo exhibitions of Shavrova took place in the UK, Germany, the US and China.

'BORDERS' is the first exhibition project by Varvara Shavrova presented in Russia. The basis of the project form a series of American flying charts made for air pilots and compiled by the US ministry of defence in the 80ies and 90ies that illustrated the Russia-China border territories in great detail. Shavrova found the charts whilst browsing through a cartography department of one of the London bookshops. Previously classified information, these maps were published and became available to general public. Whilst studying the maps in greater detail, Varvara Shavrova discovered the notes reading "border unclear" and "border in dispute".

Behind the symbolic lines of the maps was hiding a long history of Russia-China border delimitation process, the process that finally became complete in 2005, whilst the process of final demarcation is due to be completion in 2007. Having become interested in this issue,

Shavrova undertook a journey along the Russia-China border territories. Materials collected during these journeys were used in the process of creation of the 'BORDERS' project.

So what is the border? What relationship does a symbolic line on a map have to the reality of rivers, mountains, planes and cities? Is this line meant to only divide or connect? These questions form the basis of the installation presented at The Rumiantsev Palace.

Shavrova transferred the cartographic material onto large semi-transparent sheets of tracing paper. The giant scrolls, meticulously covered with lines of Chinese ink, draw the viewer into the world of visual detail, in which the real landscape, the borderline transfer into a complicated ornament that possesses its own aesthetic value. The initial meaning born in those materials is lost, the reality becomes secondary, and the viewer is invited to search for the exit from this paper labyrinth and look for answers placed by the artist using his or her own intuition.

The social aspect is given to the project by the photos and the videos, that Shavrova created during her travels along the border territories. Documentary sketches show the inhabitants of the border region, most of whom have to regularly cross the border with Russia in order to find jobs.